

WASHINGTON - U.S. Rep. Mark Kirk (R-Ill.) today announced he will offer an amendment to the Defense Appropriations bill to fully restore funding cuts to the Missile Defense Agency's budget for the deployment of U.S. Ballistic Missile Defenses to Poland and the Czech Republic. The announcement comes just hours after U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice agreed to the Polish request for U.S. defense facilities to be built in Poland.

"As Russian ballistic missiles rain down on Georgia, we should honor our commitment to allies in Poland and the Czech Republic that asked for our help," said Kirk, a member of the Appropriations Committee and a U.S. Navy intelligence officer. "To maintain regional stability and protect our NATO allies, Congress should honor this request from our allies who are concerned about Russia's invasion of Georgia."

News reports indicate that Russia used SS-21 ballistic missiles in its attack on Georgia. Other reports indicate that Russia has now moved such systems onto Georgian territory, allowing these missiles to hit Georgia's capital of Tbilisi.

The House leadership cut funding to European missile defense last May. In the House-passed version of the Fiscal Year 2009 Defense Authorization Act, Democrats cut more than \$300 million in funding for the two missile defense sites to be built in Poland and the Czech Republic. The House is currently on vacation in August and is expected to consider the Defense Appropriations Bill for FY09 when it returns in September. Rep. Kirk will offer his amendment to restore funding when the Defense Appropriations bill comes before that full committee.

In addition to the new agreement with Poland, the U.S. and the Czech Republic signed a missile defense pact in July while the U.S. and Israel wrapped up a new missile defense agreement earlier this month. Iran also tested its longest-range missile, the Safir, over the weekend. If Iran ever launched a missile toward the United States, it would pass over Poland.

"In May, the United States had not reached an official agreement with either Poland or the Czech Republic on the deployment of our missile defenses," Kirk noted. "Today, the Polish and Czech requests are formal after Russian missiles hit targets in Georgia. Congress should support the requests of the Polish and Czech people to have these defenses."